Allandale Neighbor

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Adapting to Less: Drought-tolerant Yards in Allandale

Tom Linehan

It is raining today as I sit down to write about drought tolerant yards. It is not a downpour but any rain is welcome. According to the National Weather Service, rain totals for the year at Camp Mabry are at 7.7 inches, short of the average year-to-date rainfall of 10.1 inches. The dry times continue. Neighbors are adapting when it comes to their yards, and my assignment is to find out how.

What I learned is they are doing a lot. I am not sure it is saving a lot of water but it is producing some interesting yards that can withstand the heat. Adapting to the draught has gotten people rethinking their landscape altogether. Big trees, bushes and St. Augustine are yesterday's yard. People are replacing grass with native plants, wildflowers, hardier grass mixes, vegetable gardens, and more. Warning! Once you start down this path, it is hard to turn back.

Paul Schlaud and Christina de los Santos backyard with Habiturf

The simplest approach is to rip out the St. Augustine and plant Habiturf, a drought-tolerant hybrid grass engineered by the folks at the LBJ Wildflower Center. This is what Paul Schlaud and his wife Christina de los Santos did in their front and back yard last year on Shoal Creek north of White Rock. They recently remodeled their house and used the destruction of their yard as an excuse to reseed with Habiturf. Paul and Christina are very happy with the results. In less than a year, they have a new yard. Paul said frequent watering was necessary to get it established at first. The City granted them a 30-day variance on their watering schedule to seed it. Once it took off, getting back on the City's watering schedule was fine. When I visited in May they had not watered the grass since October.

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HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

See page 23 for renewal form

The next ANA EC Meeting is June 25, 6:30 p.m., at the Northwest Recreation Center, 2913 Northland Drive. The meeting is open to the public.

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ANA General Meetings are held March and September on the fourth Thursday of the month.

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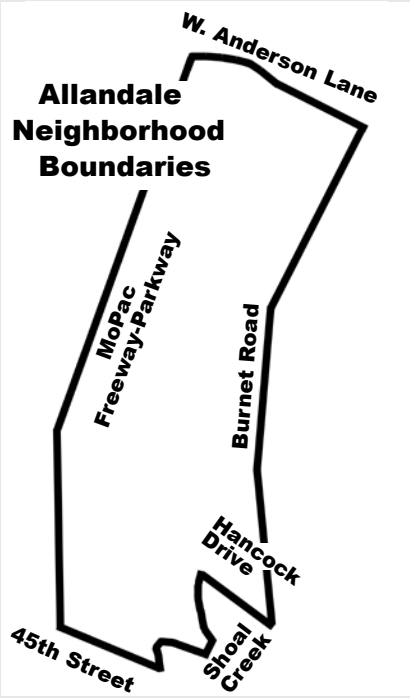

ANA President's Letter

David Mintz

In April, the ANA Executive Committee voted to support a proposed traffic signal at the intersection of Adams/Shoalmont and Burnet. It is hoped that this traffic signal will help make it easier to manage traffic associated with the new Burnet Flats Apartments that will be opening later this year. The light is part of a broader plan to add some additional traffic management signals on Burnet Road between Koenig and 45th Street over time, to help make it easier for pedestrians to cross and increase safety. In addition, the Executive Committee voted to support the efforts of neighbors to encourage the city to take action against an abandoned property on Finley that has been the subject of numerous code citations. We also heard an update on plans to restore the riparian zone along the Shoal Creek Green Belt near eastern side of 2222 and Shoal Creek.

As we enter into summer, please remember to check in on your neighbors, particularly your older neighbors, to make

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Kids' Writing Contest

Angela Caras

Hey there, do you think you're a pretty good writer? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a published journalist? You should enter the Allandale Neighbor's Fourth of July writing contest! We're looking for short (50 to 400 words) articles about this year's Fourth of July parade. Write about what you did (whether you marched in the parade or watched) and what you saw, or interview other parade goers about their experiences. Writers will be divided be age, with one group for eight and under, one group for nine to 12 year olds, and one group for kids 13 and up. Articles will be graded on overall style, how well they are written (punctuation and grammar), and how interesting they are. The winning articles will be published along with our Fourth of July parade photos in the August newsletter. Articles must be submitted between July 4 and July 8! To enter, go to our website, at *http://www.allandalereporter.org/allandale/* and click on the "Writing Contest" link. ❖

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ANA EC Meeting Notes

David Mintz

At its May meeting, the ANA (Allandale Neighborhood Association) Executive Committee heard an update from our district police representatives. All crime is down from last year and Allandale is among the safest neighborhoods in the city. The district representatives also stressed removing valuables form vehicles to reduce burglaries of vehicles.

We also heard proposals from two developers who are looking to subdivide lots in the neighborhood for residential construction. Due to deed restrictions on both lots, the ANA EC encouraged the developers to work with homeowners near the proposed homes.

In addition, there was an update on plans by the city to restripe lanes and make other safety improvements at the intersection of Woodview, North Loop and Hancock. These plans were done in response to concerns raised by ANA.

The Executive Committee has also discussed moving meetings from Thursdays to another evening beginning in September so we can have a stronger presence at city hall. ❖

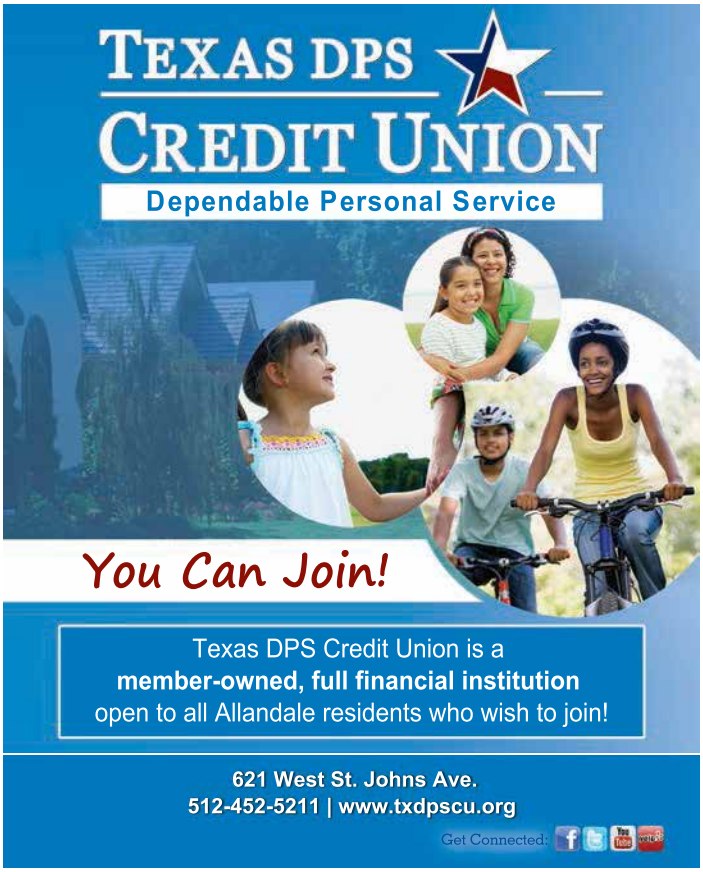
ANA President's Letter

Continued from page 2

sure that they aren't having any trouble. Also, be sure to let a trusted neighbor or two know if you are traveling, so they can be on the lookout for any suspicious activity. Finally, with the continuing drought, please be mindful of watering restrictions.

Also, for those of you are who may be new to the neighborhood or haven't attended in while, I'd encourage you to go to the neighborhood association's 54th annual Fourth of July parade. Started in 1960, this is a true neighborhood event with families and other participants gathering at 8:30 a.m. at White Rock and Bullard. Bikes, wagons, cars, scout groups, bands, impromptu groups, pets, and people who just want to walk are all welcome to join in the fun. The parade starts at 9:00 a.m. and heads to Gullett Elementary School, where there is a short program and awards are presented. Volunteers are needed to help with set up, get the start of the parade organized, judge for awards and clean up afterward.

Finally, let me remind you that our nominations process for next year is underway. Executive Committee members are expected to attend a monthly EC meeting (usually about two hours) and also to serve on at least one committee–Finance, Membership, Zoning, Bylaws, Communications, Events, etc. If you have an interest in serving on the EC and would like to be considered by the Nominations Committee, please let me know. As always, I can be reached at *dmintztx@yahoo.com* or by calling 626-0113. ❖



Allandale Neighborhood Fourth of July Parade

Marlene Meador

The Allandale Neighborhood Association invites you to join the fun for the annual Fourth of July Parade. Come out and show your true red, white and blue spirit, and enjoy the company of people who make this the best neighborhood in Austin. The parade starts promptly at 9:00 a.m. under the guidance of Grand Marshal Joe Reynolds (this is his twelfth year in this role). Thanks Joe! The parade travels north along Bullard and will end at the Gullett Elementary sports fields. A covered pavilion will be set up for patriotic festivities and presentation of awards for the participants, individuals and floats.

For those wishing to participate as spectators please gather along Bullard between White Rock and Treadwell. For anyone wanting to participate by walking, riding or marching in the parade please gather between 8:00 and 8:30 am on Bullard just south of White Rock facing toward Gullett Elementary. Keep an eye out for the wonderful volunteer judges led by Mr. John Keohane if you want to enter the contest for awards for costumes and decorated tricycles or bikes. All vehicles are asked to line up along White Rock facing east toward Bullard. Please approach this intersection from Great Northern Boulevard or Marilyn Drive to line up in the correct direction.

2012 parade participants

But don't leave right after the parade! In years past our neighborhood scout troops have sold hotdogs and snacks as a fund raiser, so you might want to bring along a little cash. Amy's Ice Cream is always a welcome entry in the parade along with the Hawaiian Ice truck. Please drop off any Blue Santa toy donations at the Hot Potato Queens float and receive a small gift of appreciation.

Hope to see you there and don't forget the sun screen! ❖

Gullett Bike Rodeo

Laura DiCarlo

About 35 kids and their parents came to Gullett Elementary on Sunday, April 14, for a bike rodeo. The back parking lot on the sunny and warm afternoon was a perfect location for youngsters to participate in an obstacle course, safety check, and "slow race" (an event in which bikers compete to be the last one to cross the finish line without losing balance on their bicycles). Christopher Stanton, Executive Director and Founder of the Ghisallo Foundation, along with two other Ghisallo Foundation volunteers, coordinated the obstacle course and slow race. A representative from Sun and Ski Sports was on hand doing safety checks and helmet fittings. Meanwhile, Gullett parent volunteers checked kids in and led a bike license plate making craft. A bike swap rounded out the event, and all leftovers from the swap were donated to the Boys and Girls Club of East Austin. There were healthy snacks as well as sweet treats, and even free bike lights and activity books donated from Bike Texas. We're hoping to do a bike rodeo every

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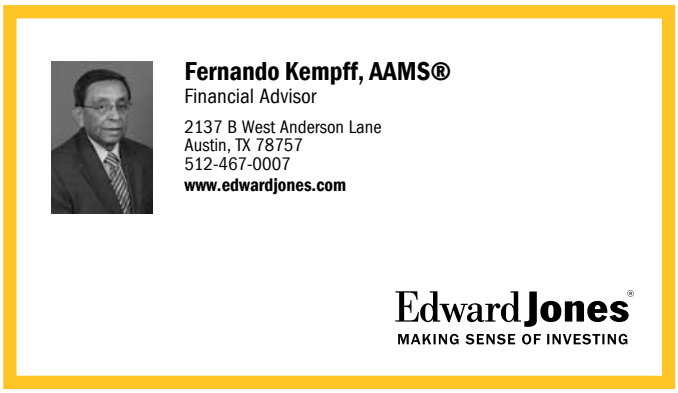

Gullett Bike Rodeo

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May from now on at Gullett, as May is National Bike Month.

Allandale is great for biking, as our streets are mostly flat and many are wide enough for bikes and cars. There were 62 bikes on the bike rack May 8 for Bike to School Day at Gullett, and the Statesman recently ran an article about a father who coordinates a "bike train" (where kids wait at stops to join a group of cyclists, just as they would if they were getting on a bus) to Brentwood Elementary. Volunteers also coordinated a bike train to Gullett during Earth Week; this will hopefully become a regular occurrence next year.

However, there are issues for students wanting to ride their bicycles to Gullett. Getting onto school grounds can be difficult because of all the cars lining up to drop off students. The Burnet Road and RM 2222 crossings are barriers to biking to Gullett and Lamar. Also, many streets do not have designated bike lanes. In addition, residents have brought up concerns that bicyclists do not always follow traffic rules; and, of course, careless motorists can be a danger to cyclists.

With that in mind, please consider these guidelines when operating a vehicle of any type:

- Come to a complete stop at all stop signs and red lights.
- People driving should not drive in bike lanes, and people biking are encouraged to ride in the bike lanes when safe to do so.
- Communication is key to safety on the roads. People riding bikes may use hand turn signals when it is safe to do so (it is not always safe for a cyclist to remove his or her hand from the handlebars).
- When approaching an intersection with the intent to proceed straight through, cyclists should make sure they are seen by drivers turning right. Oftentimes drivers are looking left for oncoming cars and roll into the intersection before they look right.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bike.

According to notes Allandale Safety committee member Kata Carbone took at the May 7 Commander's Forum at McCallum High School, Austin recently passed the "vulnerable road user" ordinance that requires people driving to safely pass road users– walkers, cyclists, and construction workers. If there are two or more marked lanes in the same direction, the motorist must vacate the lane used by the bicyclist or slow down and pass on the left at a safe distance (three feet for passenger vehicles and light trucks and six feet for other vehicles). If it is not safe to pass, motorists must slow down, follow the bicyclist and wait for a safe passing opportunity. Officers will be on the road to enforce this ordinance.

Please contact Allandale Safety Chair and Gullett PTA Green Team Coordinator Laura DiCarlo at 529-1701 or *lhdicarlo@yahoo.com* if you would like to join a committee to help foster safe routes for biking and walking in Allandale. ❖

Shoal Creek Greenbelt Restoration

Kata Carbone

Between Northland Drive and Bull Creek Road lies the popular Shoal Creek Greenbelt at Allandale. When walking, driving, or cycling by on Shoal Creek Boulevard, we are struck by the greenbelt's tranquil beauty. But up close and on foot, we can see signs of long-term neglect: a thin tree canopy, exposed tree roots, compacted earth, stream bank erosion, antiquated storm drains, a massive invasion of non-native trees and shrubs, and trash– the ubiquitous byproduct of humans.

In the spring of 2012, the City of Austin evaluated this particular section of the Shoal Creek, greenbelt along with 28 other sites, for "riparian function." When rating how well this greenbelt protected the health of the creek, the greenbelt scored in the "degraded" category.

Fortunately, a number of recent initiatives brought some much needed attention to the greenbelt. The first order of business was the designation of a "no-mow" Grow Zone by Austin's Parks and Recreation and Watershed Protection departments. This immediate, no-cost remedy allows trees, understory shrubs, and native grasses to grow and gradually improve the entire ecosystem.

Volunteers from all over town have organized and participated in a number of events to help restore this eight-acre area to its natural beauty.

Shoal Creek Group Cleanup: September 2012

Stephen Bell gathered 20 volunteers together to remove trash and several large items –including grocery carts and mattresses– from the greenbelt and creek. As Toya Haley mentioned in our October 2012 newsletter, "Stephen is committed to conserving and preserving the natural beauty of Shoal Creek."

Stephen was right when he said, "I know that we can make a real difference with continued efforts to clean up and beautify this part of the creek."

Small Elementary School Planting: November 2012

Seventy Fourth graders planted native grasses, spread thousands of wildflower seeds, and removed invasive plants, while learning all about the Shoal Creek watershed. These industrious youngsters took the "field trip" concept to a whole new level.

Watershed Creek Walk: January 2013

Mateo Scoggins from Watershed Protection led 35 nature enthusiasts on a tour of the "no-mow" Grow Zone for a lively discussion on the current and future ecological state of the creek, greenbelt, and urban forest.

Ready, Set, Plant: February 2013

A partnership between TreeFolks, Austin's Forestry Division, and Watershed Protection brought together 50 volunteers from across Austin to plant 700 saplings in the greenbelt as part of the long-range plan to restore native tree and shrub diversity, stabilize the creek banks, and improve water quality.

Several volunteers remarked in dismay at the proliferation of invasive species on both sides of the creek. In May and early June, the City of Austin partnered with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to train citizens on invasive plant identification and monitoring. Sites throughout Austin will be prioritized for treatment or removal of invasives.

Keep Austin Beautiful, Clean Sweep: April 2013

Partnering with the City of Austin's Code Compliance, Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) quickly filled the 50 volunteer slots for this cleanup project. Site leader David Orshalick was surprised and delighted when 75 volunteers –including members of the Tzu-Chi Foundation (who adopted this portion of the creek), Austin Stone Church, UT Marine Science Club, UT National Honor Society, and a few Allandale residents– arrived to remove large amounts of flood and homeless camp debris from the floodplain.

Yen-Ping Liu explained that the Tzu-Chi Foundation "values the importance of having a clean environment, and we volunteers do what we can –promoting vegetarianism and the regular cleaning of public sites, encouraging the use of reusable goods, and reducing carbon footprints– so that our children can inherit something they're proud of." Ping reflected the entire group's enthusiasm when he said, "I'm excited to see a visible change we can make in this portion of Shoal Creek."

This particular cleanup event was especially important for Allandale as it targeted a long-neglected area that offers a surprising and beautiful forest retreat not usually found in an urban setting. Read one volunteer's account of this cleanup effort at *www.keepaustinbeautiful.org/Blog-CleanSweep2013*.

Tzu-Chi Foundation

Upcoming Restoration Projects

As another benefit of increased attention to the greenbelt, volunteers identified and reported some serious flaws in the Bull Creek storm drain outfall. City engineering staff confirmed that a redesign is needed to ensure that the structure is not threatened by further erosion. See image below for an overview of the project.

The conversion of three concrete drain pipes into bioswales to filter storm water runoff from Shoal Creek Boulevard before it enters Shoal Creek has been anticipated for some time. Bioswales are stream-like areas that are designed to remove pollutants and silt in creeks and rivers by giving water runoff time to soak into the ground rather than simply spill directly into those bodies of water. Watershed Protection plans to complete the project this summer, followed by Parks and Recreation's realignment of the nature trail to bypass the bioswales.

Volunteers who care about this precious resource in the middle of Allandale can help with future greenbelt events; contact *AllandaleShoalCreek-owner@yahoogroups.com*. ❖

Shoal @ Allandale: Site Overview

The Shoal Creek at Allandale Improvement Project will redesign stormwater drainage at three sites. At each site, multiple sections of concrete drain pipe will be removed and vegetation lined channels constructed at two of the sites. The project will improve water quality and increase water infiltration.

The existing walking path will also be redesigned to take advantage of the new landscape.

Overview of the Shoal Creek at Allandale Improvement Project. More images of the project can be found at www.allandaleneighbor.com

ANA Garage Sale Success

Laura Slaughter

On Saturday, May 4, 2013, The Allandale Neighborhood Association (ANA) held its annual neighborhood garage sale. This year 37 families participated at 25 locations. One site was set up specifically as a fund raiser for a Girl Scout troop. Additionally, the ANA had a location site at Lamar where neighbors could bring unwanted items. A total of $145.80 was raised and 10 memberships were added.

If any participating families still have a sign please either return it to the next ANA meeting or drop it off at 7716 Shoal Creek Boulevard. A special thanks to Marlene Meador who tirelessly worked the ANA booth all day, Don and Beverly Harkey who transported donations, and our very own Kata the map master for getting the Google map set up and the garage sale posted to Craigslist. ❖

New Stoplight Proposed for Burnet Road

Sam Shore

The Allandale and Brentwood Neighborhood Associations have recently joined forces to work with the City of Austin Transportation Department to address traffic concerns along the south end of Burnet Road. Along with all the development along the stretch of Burnet Road between Koenig Lane / FM2222 and North Loop comes a great deal of additional auto traffic. Residents from both neighborhoods have independently approached various city staff to raise concerns about the traffic. In February 2013, representatives from neighborhoods on both sides of Burnet Road began meeting jointly with staff from the transportation division. These meetings have resulted in the transportation staff taking a special look at traffic in the area and coming up with recommendations to implement traffic management measures to address auto, bicycle and pedestrian flow along and across Burnet Road.

City staff met with members from both neighborhood associations on April 25 to discuss proposed traffic plans for Burnet Road and to receive input from residents in the affected areas. A first step to address the traffic associated with the 179 apartments being built on Adams Avenue (Burnet Flats), and to promote connectivity across Burnet Road, is installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of Burnet / Adams / Shoalmont.

The new light will not have a protected turn into the neighborhoods on either

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side, as there is no room for a dedicated left turn lane. In an effort to address speeding on Shoalmont, city staff presented a dormant traffic calming request and instructed residents about what it would take to reactivate the request and move it to the top of the priority list. City staff responded positively to residents' request to have the new light remain active around the clock rather than have it go to flashing status late at night. It was also noted that the light would have the sensitivity to detect bicycle traffic and activate when cyclists are at the intersection. Later steps may include another traffic signal at Burnet Road and Houston Street, and a pedestrian hybrid beacon at Burnet and Lawnmont.

This recent collaboration with the city on traffic concerns is an important step in developing an ongoing dialogue to deal with the new developments and increasing traffic along Burnet Road. ❖

Neighbor Profile: Max and Betty on Silverway

How long have you lived in Austin and in Allandale?

We moved here from Abilene in January 1965.

What was Allandale like when you moved here?

There were many young families just buying their first home. Many children played in the front yards, and most mothers were at home during the day while dad worked to support the family. Most had only one car. When we moved in our home, most of the children were elementary school age on our street.

The schools were not integrated when we moved in and the first nonwhite family was the Burl Hancock Family. I believe he was on the City Council. I remember one day there came a knock on the door and it was one of their children asking my permission for them to walk on our grass (there were no sidewalks going up the hill on Silverway to Lucy Reed, and their mother was concerned about them walking in the street). For the record, I believe the Hancock children were the only ones who sought permission.

Silverway Drive was open to traffic then. The North Austin Bank was being built and the owners wanted to open Silverway all the way to Burnet Road, and the neighborhood did not want that due to the many school children who walked to and from school each day … So the neighborhood came together, signed a petition, stating they would remove their money from the bank, if the street was opened, so they decided not to pursue it anymore, and the street did not open to Burnet Road.

In those days the creek at the end of our street always had water in it, and the kids all played there. When walking home from school they would play under the bridge. In the summer time they played in the creek. All along the creek were honeysuckle vines, and large Chinaberry trees, and in the spring all the kids would stop coming home from school, pull the flowers off the honey suckle vines, suck the nectar, and also throw the China Berries at one another, and go for a wade in the creek. On many occasions one of more of them would end up in the creek.

Betty and Vernon Arell

You could walk down the creek all the way to the Northwest Park. There were caves where the kids played. There were no homeless people camping in and around the park and creek, and under the bridges, so everyone felt safe for their children to walk to the park alone … All the adults watched out for all the kids. After school, and in the summer the children would gather in someone's yard, and whoever the mother was in that house was responsible for Kool-aide, cookies, or popcorn for all the children and they played there until dark, moving from house to house with just a phone call from that mother informing others where they were they were going next…

Shoal Creek ended at Foster Lane (then it was Anderson Lane). There were just fields of wild flowers, horseback riders, and there was a big dip at the end of the street at Foster Lane and Shoal Creek. There was a storm drain there where the kids played, and when heavy rains came the kids, and a few adults, would go watch cars get caught in the rising water.

We all looked forward to the Fourth of July parade. One family had a fire truck and all the kids wanted to ride, and those that couldn't ride would ride horses, bikes, wagons, and little cars, all decorated…

What do you think would surprise people the most about how Allandale used to be?

How much like a small country town it was. Most people knew each other, either from living near one another, from their kids' school, church, or some activity that brought us all together. The family evening meal was important, but after the meal, everyone was outside in the front yard, watching the kids play, while the neighbors visited one another … Now people seem to go inside, perhaps in front of the TV and are not so caring about one another. There are only a few of us left who have been here all these years and we still check up on each other, but the rest not so much.

Because we all knew each other, did things together, looked after one another, it was like we were all family. Somehow

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Neighbor Profile: Max and Betty on Silverway

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as the city has grown we have lost some of that. Perhaps it is because both adults in the home so often work and there does not seem to be time for neighborhood activities.

What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in Allandale?

There is much more traffic, and more people. There are more businesses on Anderson and Burnet Road. There is also so much more crime. There are more bike riders and runners. There are no longer horses coming down the street. I can remember when the young riders would cross over our lawn on their horses because riding on the street was so much more dangerous.

The biggest single change, I think, occurred in 1981 when our street, and most of the rest of the area, was flooded. All the houses on our street had water in them. Ours had less than the others because my husband opened the doors and it just came in and then ran out, but it ruined everything inside. People forget whatever the river runs over it carries with it, so we had all sorts of things, including stray animals floating around in our home. Following that flood, several houses on the street were condemned and had to be torn down, so many friends moved elsewhere, and it has never been the same since. The creek was re-routed, the bridge closed and made into a foot bridge. The city put large rocks in the creek (I have never understood why) and it changed the creek forever. Where there once was water trickling, even in the dry season, and fish swimming, now it has to be a very hard rain and in a matter of hours, it is all gone, and just a few puddles set and grow moss. The city does not keep the creek clean, children no longer play there, older teens, and adults now walk down the creek bed to Northcross Mall, and on a few occasions the police have come and discovered items taken in petty crimes hidden under the bridge. It is not safe to walk there anymore.

What is the most interesting / amazing / surprising thing you have ever seen in Allandale?

The most interesting to me is how the population has changed. We have many more people of other races, many from other lands and they have brought with them, their culture, language, and foods. I guess I am most surprised at the rate of growth in Austin.

What do you like best about Allandale?

My neighbors and the friends I have made here. I also like living on this corner. I can sit and literally watch the world pass by.

Editor's note: This interview was edited to fit the length requirements of the newsletter. You can read the full text of the interview at our website: http://www.allandaleneighbor.com/allandale/. ❖

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Marakesh Cafe and Grill

Marsha Edwards

Marakesh Cafe and Grill has recently relocated to Allandale from a downtown Congress location. The restaurant is family owned by a mother, daughter and son: Abir, Sarona, and Saru Saadeh. All foods are fresh, made in house. The menu includes gluten free, vegan, and sugar free entrees. Even the salad dressings at Marakesh are made fresh without sugar. Voilà! Sugar free is a big plus for me as I do not eat sugar. I have eaten many salads dry and left numerous restaurants in Austin because I could not find a single meal that has no added sugar.

My husband and I have eaten from their lunch menu twice. It was wonderfully relaxing. The food is delicious and the environment beautiful. The price range for lunch is four to nine dollars, items on the dinner menu range from four to 20 dollars. Wi-Fi is available.

The menu covers a wide range of foods from the Mediterranean area. Middle Eastern foods include falafel, dolmatis, hummus, baba ghanoush, kibbeh cones, spanakopita, tabouleh, mujadara,and kafta. The Italian panini I can personally vouch for. The Moroccan couscous is yummy. The Greek salads look to be delicious. Let us not forget daily fresh soups. Desserts are all homemade: nothing sugar free there.

The dinner menu has many of the lunch items, but adds seafood, kabobs, and lamb chops. Mezze is served: it is a feast of small plates and appetizers shared "in merriment of good company." Sounds so nurturing...

Various wines are available, currently from Italy, California and France. Middle Eastern wines are being investigated–perhaps coming soon.

Inside Marakesh

Mack and I are adding this to our list of favorite restaurants. It is located in the new strip center off Steck on the north entrance road to Lowes:

Marakesh Cafe and Grill
3301 Steck Avenue, Suite 106
Mon - Thurs: 11:00 am - 9:00 pm,
Fri - Sat: 11:00 am - 10 pm
476-7735 ❖

Adapting to Less: Drought-tolerant Yards in Allandale

Continued from front page

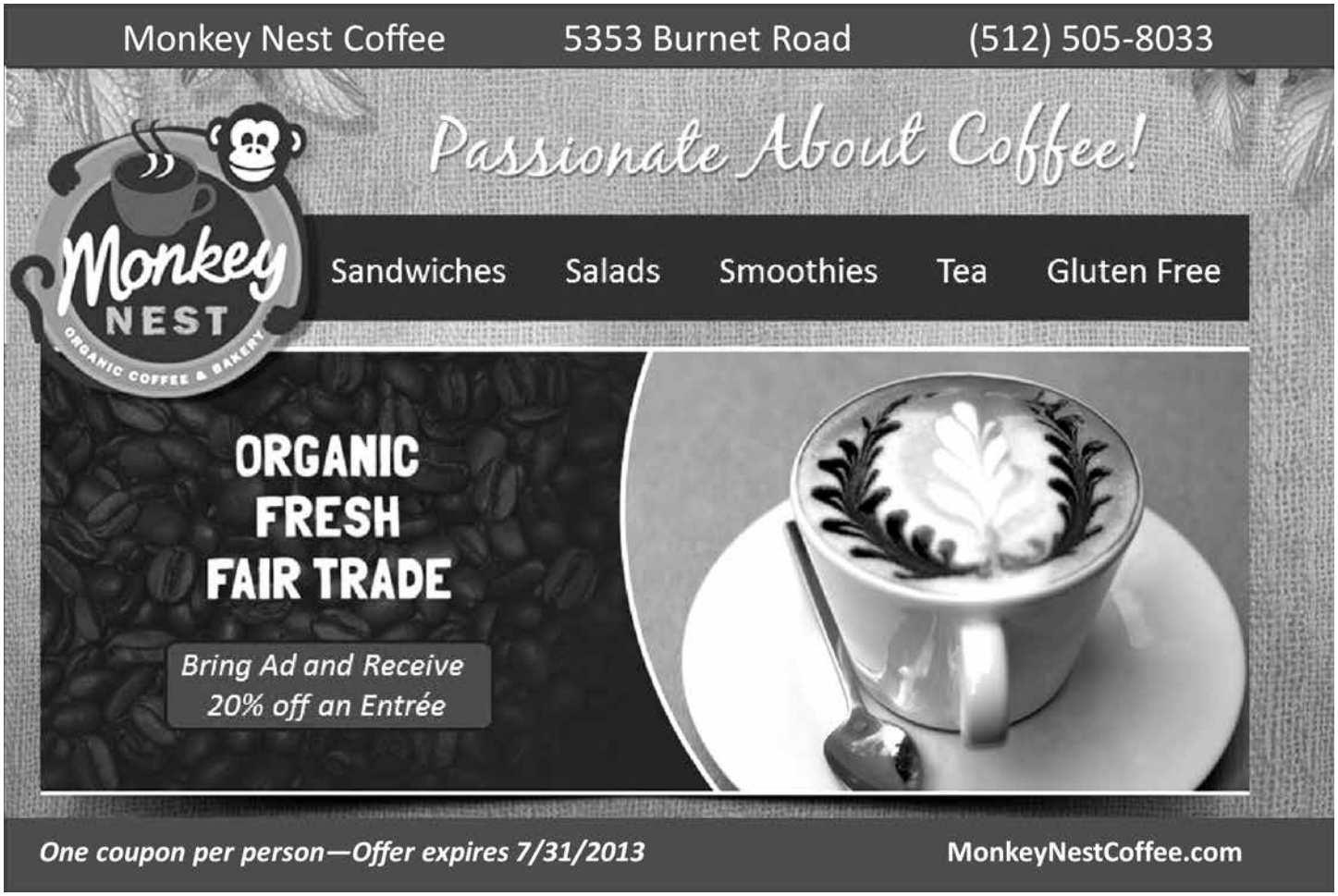
David Timmons standing in his yard full of native plants

Other things I learned are that Habiturf does not require regular watering, it is not shade-tolerant (it needs sun), and it goes dormant in the winter months as well as in the hot summer months when there is little rain. Rain brings it back to life, though. That said, it looked quite healthy. Cost for a two pound bag of seed from the Wildflower Center is $79.95, or you can purchase it through a company called DK Seeds out of San Antonio.

Katie and David Timmons, on the other hand, gave their yard on Placid Place south of Hancock a complete overhaul. Instead of replacing their grass with a heartier version, they removed it entirely and substituted native and well adapted plants. Kati and David's 75' x 150' lot is now a native plant showpiece and was featured on the KLRU's Central Texas Gardener program two years ago. Fig trees, yaupon holly, sages, and mountain laurels along with a rich variety of other native plants fill their yard and are intermixed with decomposed granite pathways, yard art, more trees, and a small sitting area. The Jasmine vine was in bloom when I visited, wafting a delightful scent around the trellis leading into their backyard. David said they started the yard project on the edges of the yard. That was back in the late 1980s. There was no grand plan at the time but the end result, many years later, sure makes it appear as if there were.

Drought tolerant does not mean you do not have to water. David says he uses less water than people with irrigations systems but he does hand water a lot, mostly on the plants most visible from the house. All of the plants would survive with less water, but watering certainly perks them up.

David is not suggesting a yard overhaul is the solution to adapting to these dry times; however, he did share some advice for those wanting to incorporate more native plants into their yards. Get the right plants, ones that are right for the soil and sunlight where you intend to plant them. If you like the results, get more. Drive around Allandale to see what others are growing. Make use of the local experts like Shoal Creek Nursery when you are ready to make your selections. "Even the big box stores have gotten better about stocking plants that will work here," David says. He also recommends checking out the Central Texas Gardener



San and Jan Williams in their xeriscaped front yard

website (*www.klru.org/ctg*), which will point you to a number of great local resources, and getting a copy of "Native and Adapted Landscape Plants," produced by the Grow Green program of the Texas AgriLife Extension. To see David and Kati's yard, go to Youtube and search on "Kati & David Timmons no-lawn garden design|Central Texas Gardener."

Janis and San Williams, who live on a corner lot on Fairlane Drive, have a hybrid version of a drought-tolerant yard. San completely xeriscaped the back yard and is on a "as I get to it" schedule to xeriscape the front and side yard. It is a big lot. He has made quite a bit of progress, though, and the yard looks great! He has put in xeriscaped beds around the trees and in the strip between the sidewalk and the street – anywhere the grass has not done well. He has accented it with pavers and with some large rocks from the cemetery. He does a little bit at time; each section is its own project. As San said, "It is always a work in progress."

Marsha and Mack Edwards, who live just north of the Williams on Bullard Drive, also have what I call a hybrid yard, one that has a mix of grass and native plants. They have bordered off a couple of large sections in their front yard, including the area between the curb and the street, where they have constructed beds using decomposed granite instead of mulch for the top layer. The beds are planted with a variety of native plants and bushes and are surrounded by St Augustine. Their back yard is completely xeriscaped (no grass), and it includes a vegetable garden and three compost piles.

As with the Williams, landscaping the yard is an ongoing process. Marsh and Mack did not do it all at once. They have been working on it ever since they moved there in 2000. They started by educating themselves about what to grow, at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Blackfoot daisies, Indian blankets, fall asters, Yellow bells, Echinacea, Feather Grass, Big Muhy and Pine Muhy grass, and Sedges are some of the native plants in her beds. Marsha says getting the right plants in the right place with the proper attention has largely been a process of trial and error. "You may have a drought tolerant plant," she says, "but it may die because you water it too much or because you planted it in the wrong place."

Steve Johnson has taken a different approach to landscaping in these dry conditions. He planted wildflower seeds. You probably noticed the results driving by his house on Shoal Creek south of Foster. His yard is full of wildflowers of all different colors and sizes. Steve says, "The main reason I did it was to improve the way that part of the yard looks and because it's easy; they self-regenerate." Whether or not it saves on water is debatable. Ultimately, he plans to xeriscape the entire yard – front and back. "At this point," he says, "my water usage is up compared to when I first moved in. I think eventually it'll go down after everything gets established." We will have to check back in a year or two to find out how it is working.

Marsha and Mack Edwards in their backyard

Steve Johnson in front of his yard of wildflowers

It was a pleasure meeting these neighbors and seeing the changes they are making to adapt to these dry times. What I learned is putting in a drought tolerant yard takes work, patience, tenacity, and a willingness to experiment. The results, at least in the case of the five yards I saw, are magnificent! Are you ready? ❖

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Dog Talk: Containment

Cheryl Silver

In this article I am using the term "containment" broadly. The notion behind adequate containment is that it will keep your dog safe.

Containment tools include items like crates, x-pens, fencing, and leashes. The following are bits and pieces of info related to the above training tools.

Crates are made either of plastic or heavy duty wire. Crate training can be painless and positive and, in some families, provides an avenue for a family to start training their "outside" dog to be inside and to be a true member of the family. I am more than happy to provide one-on-one guidance to crate train your dog.

Regardless of the type crate you use, I recommend putting it in a central place (den, living room) where the dog is not isolated (like in a laundry room). Feeding a dog in their crate starts to create a positive association with going into the crate. Setting it near a sliding glass door so the dog can see out provides a bit of stimulation to the dog who is crated. Placing a rubber-backed rug or a rubber bath under the crate protects the floor and prevents the crate from sliding. Using padding of some sort inside the crate is a good idea if the dog doesn't chew or shred it. If the dog does shred cloth, get some shredded paper (the long skinny strip rather than the stuff that is like confetti) and put some in there ... it works very well.

Transporting your dog in a crate is a smart way to travel. Should there be an accident and you are unconscious, authorities will be able to move the dog in the crate without risk to themselves. If the dog is loose, she might run into traffic or choose to guard you (in which case authorities may shoot her to save you). Plastic crates are safer than wire crates in the car. Wire welds can come apart under great stress and injure your dog.

X-pens are one of the coolest tools for containment or puppies, sick dogs, etc. X-pen stands for "exercise pen." An X-pen consists of metal panels that are hooked together and fold out to something like a playpen. Unlike a crate, they do not have a floor; they sit directly on whatever surface you select. Some agile dogs learn to climb over the top, but you can make them very desirable by putting a dog bed, toys, etc. inside. Pet stores sell stainless steel buckets of various sizes that you can hang on the side of the x-pen so that water is available but won't get knocked over. Look them up on the internet. They fold flat, come in differing heights, are highly portable and can be hooked up to a crate to add an extra dimension to utility. I love this tool; I bet you will, too.

Leashes are a tool that will keep your dog alive and out of trouble. It is simple—keep your dog(s) leashed unless in a designated off-leash area. Keeping your dog on leash will keep you out of trouble, as well. This past weekend I went to a yard sale where someone was watching their own dog and their friend's dog—neither was leashed. This was on a busy street with many people coming and going. I suggested that it would keep their dogs safe to be leashed and she said, "We have never had a problem with them off-

Continued on page 17

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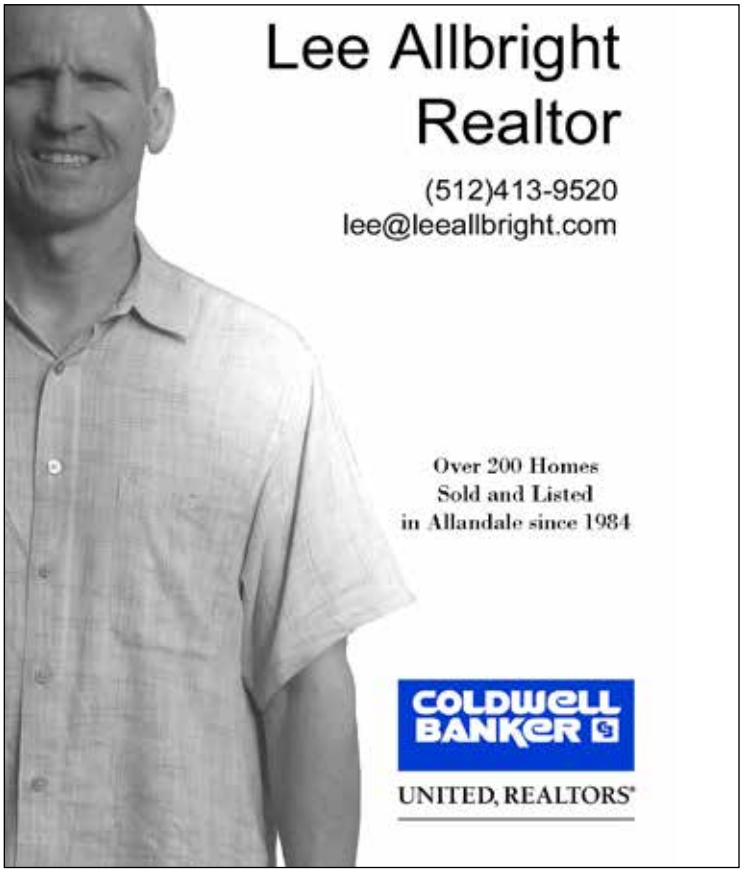

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MiguelsGalleryAndGarden.com

Dog Talk: Containment

Continued from page 15

leash near the street." I will share that numerous people who come to rescue to adopt will tell you about the death of their dog who ran out in traffic and was killed—they all say the same thing: "He never did that before."

Regarding walking an unleashed dog—regardless of how friendly your dog is, should that dog jump playfully on someone who does not want it and should the person's skin be broken, know that that may be construed as a possible bite and your dog will pay the price of being picked up or labeled as a dog who is a risk to people. What if your friendly dog runs up to a leashed dog who doesn't like it and there is a fight and someone gets bitten breaking up the fight. You can count on the unleashed dog being in trouble. Just leash them.

Here is a foster dog in an X-pen with her 10 puppies. Note the water bucket hanging on the x-pen.

Fencing is the outer limit of containment of your home. Fencing can deteriorate—check it every month at the same time that you give out the monthly heartworm preventative. Look for gaps that have evolved due to soil washing away, board breaking, or other animals digging at the fence line.

Dogs left outside often entertain themselves by digging at the fence line. You can prevent this type of escape by purchasing a four-foot wide roll of welded wire, bending the wire at a right angle and putting one side on the ground (extending two feet into the yard) and the other side up the fence (then stapling it there). Alternatively, you can bury invisible fence about 20 inches from your fence line and then activate it—it will keep dogs from approaching the fence to either dig or climb up the fence. Remember to move items that your dog can climb up to go over the fence. Of course, this becomes a moot point if your dog is inside.

This information is so basic; I look forward to talking with any of you who want to discuss containment plans for your specific situation.

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Neighborhood Watch

Laura DiCarlo

Since the April newsletter there has been just one burglary of residence (BOR), about 15 burglary of vehicles (BOVs), two Commander's Forums (one for Baker and one for Ida), a Citizen-Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP) meeting, continued graffiti removal, and issues with a drug house and an abandoned property.

I was unable to attend the Commander's Forum on May 7, but Safety Co-Chair Kata Carbone and ANA board member John Keohane provided a summary to the list-serv and a more detailed account to me. Topics included bicycle safety and Wander ID technology (which I mentioned in my April newsletter article).

Another topic of the CLASP gathering, which included citizen Neighborhood Watch leaders from all over Austin, was the Austin Police Department (APD) budget. According to Sergeant Brian Manley, who spoke at the CLASP meeting, police departments strive for two officers for every 1000 residents, and we're currently 25% short of this goal because of our population growth. A study was done in Austin that indicated APD needs 250 more officers. While they are hoping to add this many over a five-year period, APD is asking for funds to pay for 92 more officers immediately. Actually, at the forum they said 47 officers and at the CLASP meeting they said 92 officers, so there needs to be some clarification from APD.

Commander Romoser at the forum and Sergeant Manley at the CLASP meeting both pointed out that while Austin residents rate police services higher than residents of cities of similar size, APD strives to do better, and one goal is to cut response time to seven minutes or under (currently response time is 7.5-8 minutes). According to John's notes, because of the lack of staffing, police on duty spend almost all their time dealing with emergency calls and have little time for patrol and crime prevention policing. Violent crime is about 4.3 per 1000 and property crime about 54 per 1000 population, per year.

Also according to John's notes and what I heard from Sergeant Manley at the CLASP meeting, another cost is the policing for big events such as Austin City Limits and Formula 1. South By Southwest provides compensation, but many big events, though they need policing, are able to get waivers from the City Council and thus draw police away from neighborhoods without paying for the coverage.

According to Kata's notes, "The number one thing that citizens can do is to talk to the City Council to support APD. Other ways citizens can help is by attending Commander's forums to stay informed, and connect with sector officers and district representatives." ❖

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Gullett Good News

Stephanie Schultz

Gullett Librarian Kay Gooch traveled to Washington, D.C. in mid-May to collect the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) 2013 Ann Hazard Richardson Volunteer of the Year Award. Gooch was recognized for leading Gullett's fundraising efforts for the program. In the seven years that Gullett has participated, the school has raised more than $135,000, money that goes directly toward books for underserved communities in Austin.

As part of her journey, Ms. Gooch met Texas Senator Ted Cruz and the Book-Spring Board, which includes Linda Bird Johnson. She distributed books to kids at an inner-city D.C. school and spent time with Kareem Adbul Jabbar, who is the non-profit's spokesperson.

In a press release distributed by Reading is Fundamental, Gooch explained Gullett's success: "I kick off the program by pulling out a bookcase full of their favorite books, from classics like 'Fox in Socks' to new best-sellers like 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'. We talk about how much these books mean in their lives. Then I cart out a bookshelf that's mostly empty, just two or three tattered covers of old, unwanted books. They can't imagine how life would be without their books and they're so passionate about helping other kids," Gooch explained.

Back on campus, Gooch quickly dove into the Half-Priced Book Fair, an end-of-the-year favorite for kids and parents. "It smells good in there," said Drew, a third grader. "It's fun too because you get to go there, sometimes during math lessons. You can do math there, really, because you have to figure out what half price is."

All that shopping –and the arrival of consistent summer temperatures– made for lots of thirsty students and parents. Luckily for shoppers, the third graders were selling lemon-aide for just 50 cents a cup. "Everyone was thinking, it's so hot, let's get some lemon-aide," explained one of the third graders early in the week. The industrious young students were raising money for the World Wildlife Fun.

photo courtesy of Anne Jarriel

Gullett Librarian Kay Gooch dressed up as Mother Ginger during Gullett's RIF fundraising celebration

This summer Gullett will have open library hours. Once a month, Ms. Gooch will open the library doors and welcome students in to check out books and keep on reading! Check the Gullett website *(gullettgeckos.com)* to find out the dates.

Continued on page 20

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Gullett Good News

Continued from page 19

Many students will also enjoy Bluebonnet Camp, where they will read many of the selections from the 2013-2014 Bluebonnet list. Ms Gooch, along with a fellow librarian from another school, will run the camp for a week in mid-June and again in mid-July. Kids always enjoy the camp and get a great start on Bluebonnet books for the upcoming school year.

Bluebonnet will be one of many camps at the school in June and July. Creative Action camps will be held at Gullett, Be the Change camp will be run by Greg DeAtley and James Butler, and Game On will take place too. Movie camps, drama camps, amazing race camp– lots to keep Gecko students active. In July, there will be several sessions of Octave Above music camp from the school music teachers.

Year End Activities

But before summer fun could begin, the kids were busy going on some fun field trips during May. The fifth graders went to the LBJ Library; the fourth graders went to the Capitol and were joined by the fifth graders to attend the Austin Symphony. The third graders went to the IMAX with their kindergarten buddies, and the preK ventured out to a water park. In between all that, the choir put on their spring concert, our students biked to school for national bike-to-work day and of course, the Gullett talent show spotlighted the many skills of the students.

Changes for Next Year

In 2013-14, third, fourth and fifth grade students will travel from teacher to teacher during the school day. Gullett teachers in the upper grades will be department specialists, with each focusing on their subject matter. All students will get the opportunity to learn from all the grade-level teachers. In this way, Gullett teachers are honing their skills on one subject.

With the new structure there will be some teacher changes; but, according to Principal Janie Ruiz, those changes are still being determined. Stay tuned to find out who will be where next year.

Dates to remember:

August 22: Back to School Skate Night
August 23: Meet the teacher Day 11:30-1:00 p.m.
August 26: First Day of School ❖

Online Content

There is more to read online!
Go to *http://www.allandaleneighbor.com/allandale/* for additional articles not in this newsletter. You will find articles about property taxes, the recent neighborhood survey, green efforts at Lamar Middle School, and the entire text of the interview with 50-year (well, almost) Allandale residents Max and Betty Arrell. ❖

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Lawn Preservation Through Another Hot Summer

Ginger Soule

If you haven't applied compost to your lawn this spring, it is not too late to do so. A quarter inch sprinkling is enough to give a powerful boost to your lawn's health. Add a sprinkling of horticultural molasses (it comes either as a dry powder or a liquid concentrate) and the two together will confer some drought tolerance that a lawn without this treatment will lack. The third part of helping drought tolerance is to water deeply on your water day. Shallow watering encourages roots to stay in the top few inches of soil, whereas deep watering encourages roots to grow deeper into the soil seeking water as the top few inches of soil dry out. Last but not least, mow your lawn as high as your mower will allow. Longer leaf blades shade both the ground and their own roots, keeping evaporation to a minimum. This simple lawn care regimen will do wonders to your lawn's ability to survive hot summers.

The reason this works is not obvious. However, research in soil science has shown that keeping the soil healthy via compost, molasses and in the fall a good organic fertilizer (8-2-4) is sufficient, and that this type of fertilizer works far better than fertilizers with high numbers. When we "feed the soil" rather than trying to feed the plants (which major chemical fertilizer companies try to convince us to do) we are actually feeding the beneficial microbes in the soil– especially Mycorrhizal fungi. These highly beneficial fungi carry on a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship with plant roots, helping plants take up minerals, which would be unavailable to the plants otherwise. And make no mistake, both plants and humans are dependent on minerals to maintain a healthy immune system and to help combat external stresses such as drought. Fall fertilization helps grass and other plants store carbohydrates in their roots for surviving winter.

Did anyone else have difficulty getting tomato plants established this spring? We had many nights of 45 degree temperatures or below; and tomatoes, being semi-tropical plants, will not thrive with temperatures below 45, much less freezing. June through about July 10 is the period you can replant tomatoes for a fall crop. I control pests on tomatoes two ways. For all pests except spider mites, I cover my tomato cages with petticoat netting from Joann Fabric. It is 72 inches wide. This will keep out tomato horn worms, stink bugs and Lygus (leaf-footed bugs that "sting" tomatoes leaving a decaying dark spot). I clothespin the netting to the tomato cages. A liquid spray called Organicide will get the spider mites, which of course can get through the holes of the netting. The best tomatoes to use for fall are cherry and "indeterminate" varieties. There are also a few heat tolerant varieties which should be available at our knowledgeable local nurseries. (Forget the big box stores where the staff rarely know the difference between a determinant and indeterminant tomato variety). Determinant varieties set almost all their fruit at the same time. Indeterminant varieties continue to grow (hence the name tomato vines) and continue to set fruit over an extended period. For non-heat tolerant varieties, fruit production will wait until night temperatures cool some.

Good luck with all your gardening endeavors! If anyone would like to have a particular garden topic covered, you can reach me, Ginger, at 477-6812. ❖

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Chiggers

Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist

Chiggers are the larvae, or immature stage, of a certain type of mite. These larval mites climb onto people when they walk through infested areas. The chiggers wander around the body seeking a good site to feed. They prefer to feed in areas where skin is thinnest or where clothing fits tightly, such as the ankles, waist, and behind the knees and groin.

Chiggers do not burrow into the skin as many people believe, so "smothering" them by painting the bite area with nail polish will not do anything to relieve discomfort. Instead, chiggers inject a digestive enzyme which breaks down skin cells. The chiggers eat the broken down skins cells. Itching and redness is caused by our body's reaction to the enzymes chiggers inject into us. Itching typically begins three to six hours after being bitten, peaks at 24 hours, and can last up to two weeks.

Chiggers inject a digestive enzyme which breaks down skin cells.

Try to avoid chigger infested areas; but since this is not always possible, here are some other things to try:

- Wear protective clothing– tightly woven items that fit loosely, including long sleeves and pants, shoes or boots,
- Tuck pants legs into boots,
- Avoid sitting on the ground,
- Remove and launder clothing as soon as possible after being in infested areas,
- Shower or bathe after being in an infested area, scrubbing vigorously with a washcloth, and
- Use an insect repellent with DEET or picaridin

To treat chigger infestations around the home try the following:

- Keeping lawn trimmed,
- Maintain vegetation; do not allow weeds to grow up and keep brush cleared, and
- Use residual pesticide sprays, usually pyrethroids

For chigger bites:

- Do not scratch pustules; opening pustule might lead to infection
- Oral antihistamines or topical anti-itch creams to relieve itching sensation

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist, at 854-9600. Also check out *www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com.* ❖

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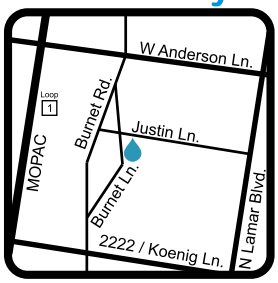

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